

NSC BRIEFING 25X1

18 September 1958

State Department review
completed

THE MIDDLE EAST



Lebanon

- I. The security situation in Lebanon has improved superficially. However, the arrest on Tuesday of five prominent army colonels, presumably on charges of plotting a coup against Shihab, will certainly cause unrest amongst pro-Chamoun elements.
 - A. All of these officers were strongly pro-government and were energetic in fighting the rebels.
 - B. Pro-government circles blame opposition pressure on Shihab as the cause of the arrests.

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2. It is possible that Nasir's propaganda machine may try to implicate the West in the supposed conspiracy of the officers

- II. The most critical period will come after the inauguration of Shihab next Wednesday. Opposition pressure for key cabinet representation will almost certainly increase.

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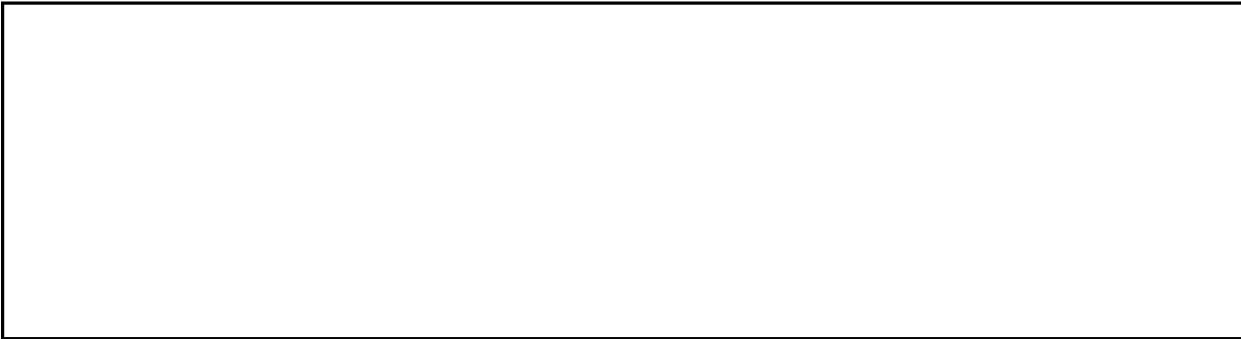
Jordan

III. Hammarskjold's effort to implement the General Assembly resolution on the Middle East apparently has failed in its major objective. Nasir has refused to give adequate assurances of non-interference in Jordan.

A. Cairo has taken the position that the Assembly's resolution was intended primarily to expedite the withdrawal of Western troops, and has warned that severe tension would result if their evacuation were not speedily arranged.

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Iraq

IV III.



B. The first overt move in the power struggle was the removal last Friday of Arif from his post of deputy commander of the Iraqi armed forces. Arif remains Vice Premier and Minister of the Interior.

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D. Premier Qasim has assumed a more public role. In a warning to "foreign conspirators who want to restore the old regime in another form," Qasim presumably aimed at supporters of union with the UAR.

E. The UAR can be expected to increase its efforts to support the advocates of union in Iraq, and to counter a coup against the Qasim bloc.

- F. Nasir, coping with mounting economic and political difficulties in Syria and Egypt, faces the most severe test of his leadership to date.
- G. In a further effort to strengthen support for the new regime the government has resorted to the potentially dangerous procedure of releasing political prisoners and Communists. It has also loosened restrictions on the fiercely nationalist Kurds, who number about 300,000 out of 6 million Iraqis.
1. The return of militant Kurdish leader Mullah Mustafa Barzani from exile in the Soviet bloc, now scheduled for late September, will be the occasion for a large Kurdish demonstration which could get out of hand.
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Iran

27. Meanwhile, Iran is concerned over possible disturbances among its Kurds.
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- B. Tehran officials are worried over the effect the return of Barzani may have. Barzani helped form a short-lived Soviet sponsored Kurdish republic in Iran in 1965-66.
- C. A sizeable Kurdish uprising in Iran could, by keeping security forces occupied, provide military and civilian plotters in Tehran the opportunity to move against the Shah.

1. Conspiracy continues in the Army and among Tehran intellectuals and semi-literates to reduce the Shah's powers or create a republic, since the Shah seems incapable of taking any action in the reform field.
2. The Shah is aware of the danger and is attempting to make some changes.
3. Revolutionaries, however, believe the Shah can do little because of the corrupt royal family and Court, and opposition from those who benefit from the status quo.

Israel

- VI. Concern over Nasir's growing influence is leading to increasingly close cooperation between Israel, Turkey and Iran.
- A. The Israelis are striving to establish a new balance of power by promoting cooperation among the non-Arab states.
 - B. An Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman has informed the American Embassy in Tel Aviv that there has been a steady increase in Egyptian reconnaissance by both regular forces and terrorists in Israel since the Iraqi coup.
 1. In publicizing the new infiltration, Israel may be building a case to support its current requests for arms aid.
 2. In the past such reports have often served as justification for Israeli retaliatory action.
 - C. Foreign Minister Meir has indicated that Israel may occupy Jordanian territory in the event of chaos in Jordan or even the impending presence of the HAK in West Jordan.

1. She has asserted that Israel could not risk waiting for overt UAR aggression and then subsequent Western intervention.
2. Mrs. Meir said that a "beautiful funeral...would do us no good."

Arab League

VII) The Moroccan and Tunisian decision to join the Arab League gives Nasir another significant victory. Membership in the Egyptian-dominated League will now include all independent Arab states--including those which in the past have opposed him.

Morocco

VII) A reshuffle of the Moroccan government is imminent, and left wing Istiqlal leader Bouabid may become premier. Bouabid probably would be a more dynamic premier than Premier Balafrej, but would be likely to be even less conciliatory regarding American bases.

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